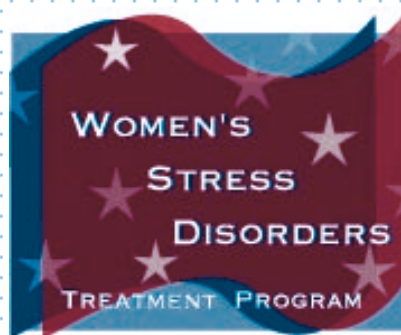


# ***Taking Care of Yourself***

**The first step in  
reclaiming your life**

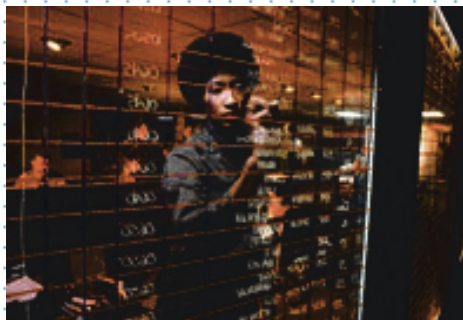


## **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

William S. Middleton VA Hospital  
2500 Overlook Terrace  
Madison, WI 53705  
608-280-7084

## ***Why is it so hard for me to take care of myself?***

- ◆ Women in our society are socialized to take care of the needs of others, which sometimes leaves no time or energy for taking care of their own
- ◆ Sometimes women's history of trauma convinced them that they don't deserve better treatment, either by others or by themselves



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## ***How do I overcome that and treat myself better?***

- ◆ Sometimes it works to change behavior first, sometimes it is better to first change your thinking.
- ◆ Put yourself on the list of “things to take care of today” and then actually do it.
- ◆ Remind yourself that, unless you are okay, you won’t be able to help anyone else.



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## ***What kinds of things are involved in self-care?***

- ◆ Physical safety
- ◆ Taking care of your health
- ◆ Treating yourself with compassion
- ◆ Developing positive relationships with others
- ◆ Participating in meaningful activities



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## ***Physical safety – the foundation***

- ◆ We focus on physical safety first because nothing else can be accomplished unless you are physically out of danger.
- ◆ No matter what anyone told you in the past or present, everyone is entitled to be safe.
- ◆ Physical safety means you are not experiencing violence or threats of violence from others (including people you know as well as strangers).



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## ***What are some ways to be safer physically?***

- ◆ Use the locks on your doors
- ◆ Do not give keys to your home to people you do not know well, who are untrustworthy, or who treat you badly.
- ◆ Be aware of your surroundings, especially when traveling alone or in dangerous neighborhoods
- ◆ Get help in eliminating violence from your relationships



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## ***What else?***

- ◆ Keep a clear head. Although the abusive behavior of others is never your fault, using alcohol or drugs leaves you less able to determine whether a situation is unsafe, and less able to take actions that would increase your safety.
- ◆ What can you think of in your life that would help you be safer?



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***I see how physical safety is important. What else?***

- Take care of your health
- See your doctor and dentist regularly and follow their advice
- Take medications as prescribed
- Include physical activity in every day
- Eat a balanced diet
- Avoid excessive caffeine, alcohol and other drugs
- If you use tobacco, quit



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## ***Treating yourself with compassion***

- ➔ Be kind to yourself, like you might to a close friend or a child.
- ➔ Recognize and appreciate your positive characteristics and behavior.
- ➔ Practice accepting compliments from trusted others in a way that allows you to really take it in. Just say “thank you”.
- ➔ Allow yourself to be human and imperfect.



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## ***Nurturing positive relationships***

- ◆ Choose relationships wisely
- ◆ Maintain a balance in relationships of offering and accepting help and support
- ◆ Speak up in a relationship-enhancing way about how the other person's behavior affects you
- ◆ Allow others to be human and flawed, but not to consistently mistreat you



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## ***Participating in meaningful activities***

- ◆ Whether it is paid or unpaid, find an activity which helps you make meaning in your life
- ◆ For example, mentor a person in Special Olympics, or help plant a neighborhood garden, or offer to be a friendly visitor to an older person



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***For more information on any of these, take a look at other units***

- Riding out uncomfortable feelings
- Mindfulness
- Improving this moment
- Making and keeping friends
- Enhancing relationships
- Assertiveness skills
- Creating meaning



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